THE

WITNESS.

ON PREDESTINATION AND GRACE.

ERASMUS had attacked Luther on the doctrines of predestination and grace; and, according to the cant of modern objectors, he urged, "What can be more useless, than to publish this paradox to the world, namely, That whatever we do, is done not by *virtue of our own free will*, but *in a way of necessity*, &c.? What a wide gap does the publication of this tenet open among men, for the commission of all ungodliness? What wicked person will reform his life? Who will dare to believe himself a favourite of Heaven? Who will fight against his own corrupt inclinations? Therefore, where is either the need or the utility of spreading these notions, from whence so many evils seem to flow?"

To this Luther triumphantly replies—"If, my Erasmus, you consider these paradoxes (as you term them) to be no more than the inventions of men, why are you so extraordinarily heated on the occasion? In that case, your arguments affect not *me*; for there is no person now living in the world who is a more avowed enemy to the doctrines of men than myself. But, if you believe the doctrines in debate between us to be (as indeed they are) the doctrines of God, you must have bid adieu to all sense of shame and decency thus to oppose them. I will not ask, whither is the *modesty* of Erasmus fled? but, which is much more important, Where, alas! are your fear and reverence of the Deity, when you roundly declare, that this branch of truth, which he has revealed from heaven, is at best *useless*, and unnecessary to be known? What, shall the glorious Creator

be taught by you his creature, what is fit to be preached, and what to be suppressed? Is the adorable God so very defective in wisdom, and prudence, as not to know, till you instruct him, what would be *useful* and what pernicious? Or, could not *he*, whose understanding is infinite, foresee, previous to his revelation of this doctrine, what would be the consequences of his revealing it, till those consequences were pointed out by *you?* You cannot, you dare not, say this. If then it was the divine pleasure to make known these things in his word, and to bid his messengers publish them abroad, and to leave the consequences of their so doing to the wisdom and providence of him in whose name they speak, and whose messages they declare; who art thou, O Erasmus, that thou shouldst reply against God, and say to the Almighty, What doest thou? St. Paul, discoursing of God, declared peremptorily, *Whom he will he hardeneth:* and again, *God willing to shew his wrath*, &c. And the apostle did not write this to have it stifled among a few persons, and buried in a corner; but wrote it to the Christians at Rome; which was, in effect, bringing this doctrine upon the stage of the whole world, stamping an universal *imprimatur* upon it, and publishing it to believers at large throughout the earth. What can sound harsher in the uncircumcised ears of carnal men, than these words of Christ, *Many are called but few are chosen;* and elsewhere, *I know whom I have chosen?* Now these and similar assertions of Christ and his apostles, are the very positions which you, O Erasmus, brand as useless and hurtful. You object, If these things are so, who will amend his life? I answer, Without the Holy Ghost no man *can* amend his life to purpose. Reformation is but varnished hypocrisy, unless it proceed from grace. The elect and truly pious are amended by the Spirit of God; and those of mankind, who are not amended by *him*, will perish. You ask, moreover, Who will dare to believe himself a favourite of Heaven? I answer, It is not in a man's own power to believe himself such, upon just grounds, till he is enabled to from above. But the elect shall be so enabled: they shall be enabled to believe themselves to be what indeed they are. As for the rest, who are not endued with faith, they shall perish; raging and blaspheming, as you do now. But, say you, these doctrines open a door to ungodliness. I answer, Whatever

door they may open to the impious and profane, yet they open a door of righteousness to the elect and holy, and shew them the way to heaven, and the path of access unto God. Yet you would have us abstain from the mention of these grand doctrines, and leave our people in the dark, as to their election of God. The consequence of which would be, that every man would bolster himself up with a delusive hope of a share in that salvation, which is supposed to lie open to all; and thus genuine humility, and the practical fear of God, would be kicked out of doors. This would be a pretty way indeed of stopping up the gap Erasmus complains of! Instead of closing up the door of licentiousness, as is falsely pretended, it would be in fact opening a gulf into the nethermost hell. Still you urge, Where is either the necessity or utility of preaching predestination? God himself teaches it, and commands *us* to teach it; and that is answer enough. We are not to arraign the Deity, and bring the motives of his will to the test of human scrutiny, but simply to revere both him and it. He, who alone is all wise and all just, can in reality (however things appear to us) do wrong to no man; neither can he do any thing unwisely or rashly. And this consideration will suffice to silence all objections of truly religious persons. However, let us, for argument's sake, go a step further. I will venture to assign over and above, two very important reasons why these doctrines should be publicly taught:

1. For the humiliation of our pride, and the manifestation of divine grace. God hath assuredly promised his favours to the truly humble. By the *truly humble*, I mean those who are endued with repentance, and despair of saving themselves: for a man can never be said to be truly penitent and humble, till he is made to know that his salvation is not suspended, in any measure whatever, on his own strength, machinations, endeavours, free will or works; but entirely depends on the free pleasure, purpose, determination, and efficiency of another, even of God alone. Whilst a man is persuaded that he has it in his power to contribute any thing, be it ever so little, to his own salvation, he remains in carnal confidence: he is not a self despairer, and therefore is not duly humbled before God; so far from it, that he hopes some favourable juncture or opportunity will offer, when he may be able to lend a help-

ing hand to the business of his salvation. On the contrary, whoever is truly convinced that the whole work depends singly and absolutely on the will of God, who alone is the author and finisher of salvation, such a person despairs of self assistance: he renounces his own will and his own strength: he waits and prays for the operation of God; nor waits and prays in vain. For the elect's sake, therefore, these doctrines are to be preached; that the chosen of God, being humbled by the knowledge of his truths, self emptied, and sunk into nothing as it were in his presence, may be saved in Christ, with eternal glory. This then is one inducement to the publication of the doctrine, that the penitent may be made acquainted with the promise of grace, and plead it in prayer to God, and receive it as their own.

2. The nature of the Christian faith requires it. Faith has to do with things not seen. And this is one of the highest degrees of faith, stedfastly to believe that God is infinitely merciful, though he saves comparatively but few, and condemns so many; and that he is strictly just, though of his own will he makes such numbers of mankind neceſſarily liable to damnation. Now, these are some of the unseen things whereof faith is the evidence. Whereas, were it in my power to comprehend them, or clearly to make out *how* God is both inviolably just, and infinitely merciful, notwithstanding the display of wrath, and seeming inequality in his dispensations, respecting the reprobate, faith would have little or nothing to do. But now, since these matters cannot be adequately comprehended by us, in the present state of imperfection, there is room for the exercise of faith. The truths, therefore, respecting predestination in all its branches should be taught and published: they, no less than the other mysteries of Christian doctrine, being the proper objects of faith on the part of God's people."

Therefore it becomes us, with the apostle, to adore what we cannot comprehend, when he triumphantly exclaims, *O! the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

FOR THE WITNESS.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.....No. II.

4. As Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh or only a creature, it increases or diminishes the value of his atonement. Whoever he was, man, angel, super-angelic creature, or Immanuel, God with us, he suffered "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." 1 Pet. iii. 18. Acts iv. 12. It was surely the dignity of his character which gave value and efficacy to the blood that he shed for the remission of sins. If this be not admitted, let it be shown why the blood of a bull or a goat was not as precious as his. The blood of either of these shed in the greatest abundance could not take away sin; for thus it is written in the page of inspiration, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Heb. x. 4. and ix. 13, 14.

If Jesus Christ was *but a man*, as some suppose, it will be difficult to perceive how his death could be an atonement for sin, more than would have been the death of any other man. "If one man," saith the scriptures, "sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" 1 Sam. ii. 25. Such persons as believe Jesus Christ to be *merely* a man can answer not only this question, but they give us much additional information. According to them, Jesus Christ, who is but a man, can not only *entreat* for those who sin against the Lord, but he has also atoned for their transgressions. David says, no man "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever;) that he should still live forever, and not see corruption." Psal. xlvii. 7—10. If Jesus Christ be *but a man*, this declaration of David is not true, for he can deliver not only from temporal death, but this *mere man* by his

death hath delivered the souls of many from the lowest hell. He was indeed a man, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" but he was also "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace;" the "Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Isa. liii. 3. and ix. 6. 1 Tim. ii. 5.

That Jesus Christ was not an angel, the oracles of God abundantly and plainly intimate. Thus it is written, "for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Heb. ii. 16. "And again, when he bringeth in the First Begotten into the world, he saith, And let *all* the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Heb. i. 6–8. He must be a very singular man, or even angel, whom *all* the angels of God are commanded to worship, who is even called God, and whose throne is for ever and ever.

That he is, as some others believe, a super-angelic creature, is without foundation in the oracles of truth. If he were, the difficulty would still remain; for his atonement would only be the atonement of a creature. If he were a super-angelic creature, it would follow that a creature died for the ungodly, and rose again for their justification; and that this creature's blood cleanseth from all sin. But what saith the scripture concerning him: "Who being"—What? a super-angelic creature? No; "Who being in *the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;* but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is"—What? a super-angelic creature? No such thing—"That Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii. 6—11. Again, "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in

these last days spoken unto us by"—a super-angelic creature? No; but "by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Who being" a super-angelic creature? Nothing like this;—"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. i. 1—4. Once more: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is"—a super-angelic creature? No; "Who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but"—whom? a super-angelic creature the Lord? this would be strange language—"*Christ Jesus the Lord*, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the *glory of God* in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 3—6.

If Jesus Christ be a super-angelic creature, and language have any meaning, it cannot be denied that a creature created all things and upholds them. That this creature was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yea, that this creature is God. If this be true, we have only a creature for a God; and this creature is the Saviour of the world. It will also follow, that sin is not so great an evil as the Bible seems to represent it; seeing the death of a creature can atone for it.

If Jesus Christ be God manifest in the flesh, as it is believed he is, the value of his atonement is clearly perceived. The dignity of his character satisfactorily accounts for the consoling declaration by the Spirit of God, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Believing this, we know that the apostle says with great propriety, that we are redeemed with "*the precious blood of Christ;*" but denying it, no such propriety appears. Admitting the important truth that Jesus Christ was Immanuel, God with us, we perceive the solid ground upon which the apostle stood, when he triumphantly asked, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is *Christ* that died." Rom. viii. 33, 34.

And also from what the apostle drew his conclusion when he said, "There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 1. Believing this doctrine, we also perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin. In the death of Jesus, a view of the divine character is given, both amiable and awful. There the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against sin, and there the love of God is manifested to a guilty world. In his cross may be seen what is calculated to alarm every worker of iniquity, and prevent the chief of sinners from despair. But for his death we should have been forever non-plussed with the question, "How shall man be just with God?" Here it receives a satisfactory answer: "Christ died for the ungodly. He suffered the just for the unjust, that all who believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Reader, dost thou believe on the Son of God? Whom do you think Jesus is? God, or a creature? Are you, like Nicodemus, saying, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God?" or, like Peter, "Thou art the *Christ*, the Son of the living God?" If the former, "Marvel not" when it is said, "Ye must be be born again." If the latter, this change has been produced, for, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." John iii. 7. 1 John v. 1. Or are you among the many who live in total indifference about his character and salvation? Remember Jesus hath declared, "Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." Then say, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

(To be continued.)

FOR THE WITNESS.

ON SYMBOLICAL LANGUAGE.....No II.

It is a question which has admitted of some discussion, when and by whom alphabetical writing was invented. Some have thought that it was first invented by the Phenicians. Others have thought that Moses received the knowledge of it from God on Mount Sinai, and that the first specimen ever afforded to the world, was exhibited on the

two tables of stone. At whatever period of the world it was introduced, or by whomsoever first invented, it is evident that the former manner of writing in hieroglyphics, had considerable influence upon it. It appears that after alphabetical language came to be used, men not only gave the names of those things they had occasion to speak about, but also in alphabetical language continued to express the symbols by which these things were formerly represented. This is evident from many parts of the word of God, particularly those which relate predictions of future events, or describe the fates of kings and nations.—It is hoped that the consideration of these will tend to elucidate many parts of the divine oracles.

1. Symbols taken from sea monsters.—The kingdom of Egypt was anciently represented by the symbol of a crocodile. The reason of this probably was, because that creature was an inhabitant of the Nile.—Thus the Spirit of God, speaking of that people, when God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and destroyed the Egyptians, "Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the *dragons in the waters.*" Probably the king of Egypt is represented by leviathan; "Thou brakest the heads of *leviathan*, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness." Psal. lxxiv. 13, 14. This is still more clear from Ezek. xxix. 3. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the *great dragon* that lieth in the midst of his rivers, who hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself," &c. See also Isaiah xxvii. 1.

2. Symbols from insects.—Thus a *fly* was the symbol for the king of Ethiopia, and a *bee* for the king of Assyria. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the *fly* that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the *bee* that is in the land of Assyria." Isa. vii. 18. The meaning seems to be, that these two kings should be called to punish Israel for their sins. The reason why these kings were described by these symbols probably was, that they had these images for their ensigns.

3. Symbols from fowls.—Thus in symbolical language, a *king*, or *chief ruler* in a nation, was represented by *a man with wings* of some flying fowl. Commonly the supreme

ruler was represented with four, and his princes with two. The stretching out, or spreading of the wings, denoted not only design and motion, but swiftness. Thus the prophet Jeremiah, predicting the invasion and desolation of Moab, says, "For thus saith the Lord, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab." Jer. xlviii. 40. Isaiah also, predicting desolation to Judea by the invasion of the king of Assyria, represents it by the stretching out of his wings. "The stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." Isa. viii. 8. God, as was noticed in the former number, is represented as having wings. His covering his people with the shadow of his wings, or spreading them over them, represents his care of his people, and their safety under the protection of his power. Thus it is said, Psal. xci. 1. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the MOST HIGH, shall abide under the shadow of the ALMIGHTY. And again, Psal. lvii. 1. "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of *thy wings* will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

(To be continued.)

DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE.

[Extracted from a Charge by Judge Rush.]

INFIDELITY can only be supported in two ways—one is, by asserting that there is no such thing as moral obligation; which no deist is hardy enough to do. The other is, by proving that sorrow for the violation of a law, is a *sufficient* atonement, and that this is discoverable by the light of nature; which we hesitate not to say is utterly impossible, because repugnant to truth, reason, and the plain dictates of common sense. Revelation, therefore, is necessary, to shew on what terms the Deity will pardon the violation of his laws.

But it has been said, the Christian religion cannot be *this* revelation, because in *some* things it is unintelligible and incomprehensible.

It is so: and were it not so, it would be unlike all the other works of the Deity, and for that *reason only* ought to

be rejected as a mere human fabrication. Tell me, thou vain pretender to reason and philosophy, how yonder sun has continued for thousands of years to pour forth such stupendous floods of light, without any perceptible diminution? or how its rays, darting with a velocity exceeding the motion of a cannon ball, can meet the eye without the smallest pain or injury?—Tell me why the purple stream that flows in thy veins not only descends, but ascends, contrary to all the laws of motion?—Tell me why the magnetic needle points to the poles? and develop, if thou canst, the causes of its variation?—Tell me by what *fine-spun cords* thy invisible spirit is united to matter, and how thy beating heart *began* its vital motion?—Tell me

> ....."Why the *good man's* share
> "In life is *gall* and *bitterness* of soul?
> "Why the lone *widow* and her *orphans* pine
> "In starving solitude?.....
> "....."Why heav'n-born truth
> "And moderation fair, wear the red marks
> "Of superstition's scourge?".....
>
> THOMSON.

Explain to me these, and ten thousand other mysteries that exist in the books of nature and providence, and then will I also explain to you the mysteries in the volume of revelation. How preposterous and irrational, while the voice of nature proclaims aloud that the Deity is incomprehensible, and we daily see that in all his works and ways he is equally so, to expect that a revelation *concerning God himself*, the Creator of all things, should *not* contain mysterious truths, infinitely above human reason!

FOR THE WITNESS.

ON TALE-BEARING.

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth.....SOLOMON.

AMONG the numberless evils which afflict society, there is, perhaps, no one more truly detestable than *tale-bearing*. It is a species of assassination more dastardly, and frequently more injurious, than taking personal vengeance for a supposed injury. In the latter case, the laws of civil so-

ciety are adapted to punish the offender, and rid the community of the pest. In the former, there being no cognizance of the offence before any human tribunal, the wounds inflicted on the bosom of innocence often become incurable, while the perpetrator continues to hurl his poisoned shafts with impunity. Well would it be were this evil confined to worldly circles. But, alas! it is not so. Tatlers and busy-bodies crept into the church of the living God in primitive times. The apostle Paul commands such in the church at Thessalonica to be *quiet;* if otherwise, the church is directed to *note* such, and have no company with them. To Timothy the same apostle testifies that such have turned aside after Satan. Similar language is employed by Peter, in his memorable exhortation to the elect strangers which were scattered abroad; where he associates the busy-body in other men's matters with the evil-doer, the thief, and the murderer. Solomon, than whom none was ever better acquainted with human nature, considers tale-bearing as one of the greatest crimes. "The words of a tale-bearer," says he, "are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts." Moses also, that man of God, in his repetition of sundry laws for the observance of God's ancient people, commands, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people. Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour;" intimating by this connexion the enormity of the crime.

But Moses, Paul and Peter were not the only witnesses to the existence of this peace-destroyer. Every succeeding age has produced a race of those *busy idlers*, who are never so much in their element as when *going up and down*, circulating little tales of scandal, and collecting fresh materials for future employment. Some will say, if reproved, "We meant no harm." But if such were to consider that the incalculable mischiefs which they produce are chargeable to their folly, or their ignorance, they would be alarmed with the tremendous account which they must one day be called to render. Nor will it avail them to plead that such consequences were not intended: for by the description of character given by inspiration, we must conclude that those who do such things are totally destitute of that grace which imparts as well as inculcates the principle of love to our fellow-creatures, even to our enemies.

It is indeed to be lamented that the church of God should permit such characters to retain the place into which they have obtruded themselves. It is certain that the tale-bearer, the idler, the railer, the covetous, &c. are alike ignorant of the power of godliness; and from all such we are commanded to turn away. But when a church will receive or retain any who have only a *form of godliness*, (and all such most certainly deny its *power*,) it furnishes facilities, yea, even *cherishes* those poor self-deceived evil workers. How often has a family, a neighbourhood, a church, been set on fire by the tongue of a tale-bearer! James describes the character too plainly to be misunderstood. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity:—it setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

Tremble, thou idler, tale-bearer, and busy-body! Be not so awfully deceived as to think that you are Christians merely because you wear the name. LUCIUS.

FOR THE WITNESS.

ON SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.....No. II.

THOUGH the radical cause of men's neglect of the scriptures lies in the enmity of the heart against God, yet there are some other causes which powerfully operate to produce this effect. A few of these it may be profitable to notice.

The Bible is conceived by many to be so mysterious a book, as that none but those called *learned men* can understand it. It is not many ages ago, that this false notion operated so powerfully and universally that the use of the scriptures was prohibited the common people altogether. The priests claimed the exclusive right of saying what the Bible contained, and what was its meaning. The people were implicitly to believe and obey. Thus ignorance became the mother of devotion; and the less the common people knew of the truth of God, so much the better for the clergy. This book was represented as being mysterious, and even dangerous for the illiterate to examine. To permit its free circulation would tend to endless divisions, and the most pernicious heresies. Happy for us that such days of priestly

tyranny are now gone, I trust never to return. Every man may purchase a Bible for a few shillings, and read it, none daring to make him afraid. It is, however, to be lamented that many who enjoy this liberty still continue to enslave themselves. The popish notion that the Bible can only be understood by the *learned*, keeps it a sealed book to them. But is it true that the Bible requires a classical education to understand it?—For whom were the scriptures written? Surely not for the exclusive use of doctors in divinity, and such as are brought up within the precincts of a college. If this were so, it would follow, that God has given us a book, commanded us to search it, and to let it dwell in us richly in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding; yea, threatened us with punishment if we remain ignorant of its contents, and yet that from its very nature none but a few learned men could understand it! Is it possible that any man can believe the Almighty would trifle with his creatures in this manner? Alas! tell it not in Gath! The scriptures were intended for the use of savage and sage, and we may be sure they are written in plain popular language. It is true, there are many things in that book which neither learned nor unlearned can completely comprehend. If it were otherwise, we might justly suspect that God was not its author. But the things in that book which puzzle the peasant, also perplex the priest; and it may be asserted without fear of contradiction, that what is incomprehensible by the vulgar, is also inexplicable by the learned. Blessed be God, that the things which relate to our faith and practice, present consolation and future hope, are there so plainly revealed, that he who runs may read them. These things, instead of being *dark*, *dubious*, or *mysterious*, and requiring much learning to understand them, are so plain and simple, that they require talent, learning, and laboured sophistry, to pervert them. What, for example, can be more plain and simple than the following declarations? "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Being justified freely by his

grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Rom. iii. 23. and viii. 7, 8. and iii. 20—24. Eph. ii. 8, 9. Rom. iv. 5. Tit. iii. 8. Matt. vii. 12. These are but a very few of the simple sayings of that book, which is conceived to be so mysterious and almost unintelligible.

Instead of the obscurity of the Bible being the cause why men neglect to read it, it is because it speaks so *plainly*, that they hate it. While men love the darkness rather than the light, they will not come to this light, which shineth in a dark place, lest their deeds should be reproved. A person living in the sin of uncleanness once observed to a minister, that the Bible was a very mysterious book. It was briefly but appositely replied, that this was far from being true; for what could be more plain than "*Thou shalt not commit adultery?*"

But why is the Bible so little understood by those who profess faith in it? It is because it is so little attended to by them. If it were studied as it ought to be by Christians, it would cease to be mysterious: what appears difficult in one place, is explained in another; and if they compared spiritual things with spiritual, this complaint against the Bible would be removed. Is it possible the scriptures can be understood, if they are seldom or never read? or, if read, read only with an indifference whether they be understood or not? Our diligence in searching the scriptures will always be repaid by a proportionate increase in knowledge. In this, as in temporal things, the hand of the diligent maketh rich, while the sloth of the sluggard tendeth only to poverty. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understand-

ing: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasures, *then* shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God." Prov. ii. 1—5.

Instead of complaining that the Bible is a mysterious book, it would be much more becoming us to take shame and confusion of face to ourselves before God on account of our indolence and indifference in searching it. Can we say that we have been as diligent to find the treasures of wisdom and knowledge it contains, as we have been to possess the riches of this world, which perish in the using? In this our own hearts condemn us; and God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.—Every book, as well as the Bible, is a mysterious book to those who give themselves no trouble to understand it. The elements of mathematics or of grammar appear mysterious to a beginner, but as his knowledge increases, the mysteriousness vanishes. So it is in regard to the Bible.—Would the parent or the tutor think the school-boy justified in neglecting his grammar, were he to say, "It is very mysterious, and can only be understood by learned men?" To condemn him is to condemn ourselves. Happy is that man who condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth, for thou that judgest another condemnest thyself.—To these remarks it may be objected, Is it not said that there are some things in the Bible *hard to be understood*, which they that are *unlearned* and *unstable* wrest? Yes; but it is not said they are impossible to be understood. Besides, *the unlearned* refers not to such as have no classical education, but to such as are not taught of God: to unbelieving men who stumble at the word. Such unlearned and unstable men would not be preserved from perverting these hard to be understood parts of the word of God by a college education, but by conversion to God; for they only wrest these parts as they do the other to their own destruction. These remarks are not made to undervalue learning, but to keep it in its proper place. CYPRIAN.

(To be continued.)

FOR THE WITNESS.

HARMONY OF DIVINE TRUTH WITH CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

It is a precious source of consolation to believers, that those truths which God has condescended to reveal in his word have been indelibly impressed on their hearts by the operation of the Holy Ghost. This has produced such a conviction of the reality and glory of the gospel, that they know it is not a cunningly devised fable, but the wisdom and the power of God.

Man being a fallen creature, and God having designed to glorify himself in the endless salvation of his people, he is pleased, as the God of wisdom, to effect this salvation, in a way which will glorify all his perfections. Atonement being made for sin by his co-equal Son, a moral change must be wrought in every soul that is to be a partaker of eternal glory. In this renovation of heart, each believer is brought into the knowledge and love of the truth. And although many cannot clearly trace the connexion of the gospel system, and may have much obscurity in their understandings respecting some important principles, yet the heart of each regenerate person is submitted to *all* the truth as it is in Jesus; and were they more frequently disposed to compare their own exercises with the holy scriptures, they would be more grounded and settled in those principles about which they are sometimes wavering. This idea may be illustrated by considering the way in which they are led from nature's darkness into God's marvellous light.

When the Spirit of the Lord brings any sinner into union with himself, he first enlightens his understanding. He discovers to him the nature of moral obligation; that he is the creature of God's power; that he is a transgressor of that holy law, which is the standard of moral perfection; and that that law is guarded by a penalty, which is eternal death, or endless separation from the favourable presence of God. Under these views, he is led to an anxious inquiry respecting the eternal world. Finding that he has an immortal soul, and feeling that he is under the sentence of condemnation, the language of his heart is, How shall I escape the wrath which is to come? Can God be just in saving me from hell? Is there a possibility that so great a sinner can

obtain forgiveness? He now realizes the awful consequences of sin, in the just penalty denounced against it. He sees that sin is an evil, which neither his tears nor repentance can expiate; that he lies at the sovereign mercy of God, and that unless his arm is stretched out for his salvation, he must inevitably perish.

These exercises harmonize with the declarations of the holy scriptures, and lead the sinner to view the word of God in a different light from what he ever did before. He is made to feel this truth, that the wages of sin are death, and to know that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God.

Persons who have merely a superficial knowledge of divine truth may object, and say, that it is very singular that the Lord should lead his chosen people through such a gloomy path; and they may suppose that it would be more for his glory to give them immediate light, and peace, and joy. But this is not according to his infinitely wise plan. He sees it necessary to show them the dreadful nature of that misery to which they are exposed, and the depth of that guilt into which they are sunk, in order that they may rightly appreciate the greatness of his grace, and that they may see the necessity of that divine atonement through which their salvation is effected. Were they not thus led to view themselves and their ill-desert, they never could see the glory of that redemption which the gospel reveals.

When the sinner, under divine influence, clearly sees his guilt and impotency, the Holy Spirit discovers to him Christ Jesus as a Saviour, and the necessity of that faith in him by which he can repose his soul on his righteousness and atonement. That divine declaration, that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which sinners can be saved but the name of Jesus, is deeply imprinted on his mind; so that he believes it and rejoices therein, because it evidently reflects a glory on the divine character, which no other conceivable system could. In the first impressions which he feels of the glory of Christ, he is sweetly astonished at the infinite mercy of that gracious declaration, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. He discovers such a suitableness in Christ Je-

sus to his miserable and helpless state, that his soul hungers and thirsts after his righteousness, and after an interest in him. He does not, perhaps, realize that he now believes in Christ; but he beholds such an infinite fulness of merit in him, that his mind is much relieved from that burden of guilt which he felt when he feared there was no hope for him. Though he cannot, it may be, clearly discover his own safety from the wrath to come, yet he is happy in the view which he has of the blessedness of those who truly come to Christ for life. He discovers the certainty of their salvation in the unalterable nature of the promise of God, which he believes; and his heart is so far delivered from selfishness, that he participates in that eternal glory to which he sees others entitled through the free mercy of God in Christ. Though the mind of such a person may be long destitute of an abiding sense of interest in the Redeemer, yet where the Lord thus begins a work of grace in the heart, he will perfect it; and sooner or later all his children shall be delivered from the spirit of bondage.

The truths of God's word which are illustrated by these discoveries, are obvious to those who can discern spiritual things. The glory of divine justice and holiness are clearly displayed, as well as infinite benevolence. Though God delights in the communication of happiness to his creatures, yet he does not bestow it at the expense of any of his attributes; for notwithstanding sin could not be expiated but by the obedience unto death of his Son, yet for his own glory and the salvation of his chosen people, he freely delivered him up unto death; and having not withholden this his greatest gift, he will with him also freely give them all things. And this deliverance from eternal misery is also voluntarily undertaken and accomplished by the Saviour. The scriptures are very full in the declaration of the free love of Jesus to his people. He himself declares, "I lay down my life for my sheep. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself." The apostle also thus speaks to his Christian brethren—"Ye know the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

In the light of this subject it may be seen, that all false doctrine contradicts the word of God and Christian experi-

ence. All men-pleasing systems of religion have at their foundation this capital error, that *sin is not an infinite evil, and does not deserve an endless punishment.* It is true, the advocates of these systems may not have the hardihood openly to make such a declaration; but it will be discoverable on a close examination of their leading principles. What but this error could have disposed any persons to imagine, that Jesus Christ is not God? If sin be a finite evil, a small offence, they suppose a created being can make atonement; and of consequence that Christ is not divine. What but this error could have led to the idea, that man is not entirely depraved? If it be true, that there is any moral goodness in a natural man, then it is true, that there is something in him which is pleasing to God. And if so, he will not leave such an one to suffer his endless wrath. This error is also the foundation of another, that the soul will be annihilated. Those who hold this sentiment acknowledge that the finally impenitent cannot be saved; but as they suppose sin is not an infinite evil, they vainly imagine that the soul will be struck out of existence. And this last mistake is connected with another, the absurdity of which is plainly exposed by Dr. Edwards, namely, that God must exert his power for the extinction of the soul, which is contrary to the holy scriptures; they represent creatures so entirely dependent on him, that if he merely withholds his preserving power, they necessarily sink into non-existence. But the endless existence of the finally impenitent is proved from the threatening, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. If it be said, that this does not imply endless existence, then it cannot be proved that the righteous will be endlessly happy; for the same word which asserts the former declares the latter. Universalism also rests on this same sandy foundation, that sin is not an infinite evil; for those who believe the final salvation of all mankind, suppose that God cannot justly inflict on man an endless punishment, because, according to their theory, all his punishments of his creatures must be for their good, consequently must issue in a deliverance from misery. Thus it is seen, that whilst the work of God on the heart harmonizes with the holy scriptures, all the inventions of wicked men are in oppposition to God and his word.

BEREA.

ANCIENT DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST.

The following is a copy of a letter, taken from a manuscript in the possession of the present family of Kelly, now in Lord Kelly's library, in Britain; which was transcribed from the original letter of Publius Lentulus, at Rome. It may have appeared in print amongst us before, but we need not make any apology for its present insertion.

It being the usual custom of the Roman governors to advertise the senate and people of such material things as happened in their provinces, in the days of the emperor Tiberius Cesar, Publius Lentulus, president of Judea, wrote the following epistle to the senate concerning our Saviour:—

"There appeared in these our days a man of great virtue, named Jesus Christ, who is yet living amongst us, and of the Gentiles is accepted for a prophet of truth, but his own disciples call him the Son of God. He raiseth the dead, and cureth all manner of diseases. A man of nature somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverend countenance, such as the beholders may both love and fear. His hair, of the colour of a chesnut fully ripe; plain to his ears, whence downwards it is more orient, curling and waving about his shoulders. In the midst of his head is a seam or partition of his hair, after the manner of the Nazarites. His forehead, plain and very delicate; his face, without spot or wrinkle, beautified with a lovely red; his nose and mouth, so formed as nothing can be reprehended; his beard, thickish, in colour like his hair, not very long, but forked; his look, innocent and mature; his eyes, grey, clear and quick. In reproving, he is terrible; in admonishing, courteous and fair spoken; pleasant in conversation, mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen him laugh, but many have seen him weep. In proportion of body most excellent. His hands and arms, most delectable to behold. In speaking, very temperate, modest, and wise.—A man for his singular beauty surpassing the children of men."

FOR THE WITNESS.

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATION.

Matt. xxvii. 26. *To be crucified.*

When a person was crucified, he was nailed to the cross, as it lay upon the ground, through each hand extended to its utmost stretch, and through both the feet together; the cross was then erected, and the foot of it thrust with violence into a hole prepared in the ground to receive it. By this means the body, whose whole weight hung upon the nails, which went through the hands and feet, was completely disjointed, and the sufferer at last expired by the force of pain. This kind of death, which was the most cruel, shameful, and cursed death, that could be devised, was used by the Romans for slaves, and the basest of the people who were capital offenders. Sometimes a fire was kindled at the foot of the cross, that so the sufferer might perish by the smoke and flame. The emperor, Alexander Severus, commanded one to be executed in this manner, who was a cheat, a quack, and a dealer in (as it were) smoke, that hereby there might be some relation between his crime and his penalty. It has been thought, that below the crucified person's feet was a kind of footstool, or piece of wood jutting out, on which his feet were laid and fastened. Without this, the criminal could not long continue nailed to the cross, the whole weight bearing upon his hands. Some assert that there are no traces of this footstool in those descriptions of the cross, which the most ancient Greek and Latin writers have left us; but they speak of a kind of wooden horse, upon which the suffering person was as it were mounted, that so his hands might not be torn asunder by the weight of his body; this was a large peg fixed about half way up the cross, as appears in *Justin*, *Irenæus*, and others. Sometimes they who were fastened upon the cross lived long in that condition. *Andrew* is believed to have lived three days upon it, others nine days. *Eusebius* (Lib. vii. Cap. 8.) speaks of certain martyrs in Egypt, who were kept on the cross till they were starved to death. Sometimes they were devoured by birds and beasts of prey: and generally they were devoured after death by wolves, dogs, and birds. Guards were appointed to observe that none should take them down and bury them.

EXTRACT FROM THE LIFE OF MR. SAMUEL PEARCE.

"Oct. 10, 1794. Whilst at prayer-meeting to-night, I learned more of the meaning of some passages of scripture than ever before. Suitable frames of soul are like good lights, in which a painting appears to its full advantage. I had often meditated on Phil. iii. 7, 8, and Gal. vi. 14: but never *felt* crucifixion to the world, and disesteem for all that it contains, as at that time. All prospects of pecuniary independence, and growing reputation, with which in unworthier moments I had amused myself, were now chased from my mind; and the desire of living *wholly* to Christ swallowed up every other thought. Frowns and smiles, fulness or want, honour and reproach, were now equally indifferent; and when I concluded the meeting, my whole soul felt, as it were, going after the lost sheep of Christ among the heathen.

"I do feel a growing satisfaction in the proposal of spending my whole life in something nobler than the locality of this island will admit. I long to raise my Master's banner in climes where the sound of his fame hath but scarcely reached. He hath said, for my encouragement, that *all* nations shall flow unto it.

"The conduct and success of Stach, Boonish, and other Moravian missionaries in Greenland, both confound and stimulate me. O Lord, forgive my past indolence in thy service, and help me to redeem the residue of my days for exertions more worthy a friend of mankind, and a servant of God.

"Oct. 15. There are in Birmingham 50,000 inhabitants; and, exclusive of the vicinity, ten ministers who preach the fundamental truths of the gospel. In Hindostan there are twice as many millions of inhabitants; and not so many gospel preachers. Now Jesus Christ hath commanded his ministers to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: why should we be so disproportionate in our labours? Peculiar circumstances must not be urged against positive commands: I am therefore bound, if others do not go, to make the means more proportionate to the multitude."

THE WANDERER RESTORED.

[Extracted from the Theological and Biblical Magazine.]

Mr. Editor,

THE following letter was written by the late venerable Mr. Benjamin Francis to one of his straying sheep. It breathes so much of the spirit of the Christian pastor, and was rendered so useful in restoring the person addressed from an awful state of transgression (who, I am happy to say, is now a member of the church I have the honour to serve) that I much wish it might be made public.

My dear friend,

My love to your person, my concern for your welfare, and my relation to you as your pastor, urge me to address to you the subsequent lines.

It is with great surprise and inexpressible grief, that I hear of your persevering in a conversation so inconsistent with your former religious sentiments and feelings, so dishonourable to your Christian profession, so opposite to the doctrine, to the spirit, and to the example of the blessed Redeemer, and so awfully injurious to your own soul. Ten years ago the 11th of May next, you made a public and a solemn profession of your faith and repentance, and you adorned your profession for several years. O that it was with you as in months past! when your conduct was ornamental, when you attended and engaged in meetings of prayer and conference, when you communed with us at the table of the Lord, and when you were much esteemed and beloved by your Christian brethren. I particularly loved you, and hoped that you would have continued an ornament to your holy profession. You did run well, but ah, what hath hindered you? While so many apostatize from God, will *you* also, my friend, *go away?* Will *you* also crucify the Lord of glory the second time? Will *you* also add to my grief and discouragement? Will *you* also draw back to perdition? God forbid! Where, O where will your present conduct end? Is it better with you *now*, with respect to your reputation, peace of mind, and hope of eternal glory, than when you were in fellowship with us, and walked circumspectly with God? As your eternal interest lies near

my heart, I most earnestly and affectionately entreat of you, seriously and repeatedly to peruse the following passages: Heb. x. 24. and to the end of the chapter. 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. Matt. xxvi. 24. Jer. iii. 12, 13, 14.

O my friend! you and I have to do with an infinitely holy God, who will not be mocked, and cannot be deceived. Go, go to the throne of grace; go to the cross of Christ; neither presume nor despair. O do not oblige us to exclude you from us! O do not exclude yourself from heaven! and do not torture my mind with the fear of being a witness against you in the day of judgment!

Pray come and see me, that I may have some free conversation with you. Expect nothing from me but love and tenderness, faithfulness and sincerity; and believe me to be,

My dear friend,

Your affectionate though aggrieved pastor,

Horsley, Feb. 23, 1798. B. FRANCIS.

FOR THE WITNESS.

ON CHRISTIAN CHEERFULNESS.

THERE is one excellence in Christianity not sufficiently appreciated. HOLY CHEERFULNESS is essential to the usefulness and happiness of the Christian. How is it, then, that we see so much discontent and gloom among the redeemed of the Lord? Whatever be the cause, it is certain that religion is not; for in proportion to our knowledge of the character of God, and our love to the truth, must be our real happiness. Religion never brings misery, but removes it. If our lot be trying, true religion alone can support us. Who can be miserable, having faith in Jesus? Who unhappy in a sense of his pardoning love? Paul experienced a greater variety of afflictions than any other Christian of whom we have so particular an account; but was he ever dispirited, or enveloped in gloom? Hear his triumphant declaration, 2 Cor. iv. 7, 8, 9. Hear also his exhortation—"Rejoice evermore. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." The sorrow of the world worketh death; and perhaps we are oftentimes exercised with this, when we mistake it for godly

sorrow, which certainly brings no real unhappiness with it. Young Christians frequently declare, that however great their former pleasures, they knew nothing of real pleasure until they found it in the exercise of faith, and a consequent sorrow for sin. And Watts, in one of his lyric poems expresses a correspondent sentiment, in these beautiful lines:

"While of his absence we complain,
"And mourn and weep in all we do,
"There's a strange pleasure in the pain,
"And tears have their own sweetness too."

In reading a late London magazine I found the following account in the biography of a Mr. Daniel Burgess, who was a faithful and successful preacher at the time of the uniformity act. He was sorely persecuted by unrelenting enemies, and cruelly imprisoned for his zeal and faithfulness. Yet such was his contentment and confidence in God, that he could use such language as this, "But it must and shall be said, to the praise of new-covenant grace, all my nights are not sleepless, all my days are not restless, every friend is not faithless, nor are all enemies found useless; all disturbed studies are not tasteless, all the disadvantaged sermons have not proved fruitless; all the various troubles have not been comfortless; nor the comfort mixed with them successless. Remember," says he, "what I add when you see me not, and when I shall be seen no more; I am near home; and whatever befals me betwixt this and home, I shall strive myself, and exhort such as you, to maintain a holy, gospel alacrity and cheerfulness. Because it is most sure our God approves it, and requires it in all states. Our Lord Jesus Christ is anointed to give it to us. Our holy infinite helper, is sent to work it in us. Our dangerous enemy is advantaged by our want of it. It is our spiritual bread to strengthen us. It is our bright armour to adorn and defend us."

ON ORATORIOS.

[Extracted from the London Evangelical Magazine.]

A CORRESPONDENT having expressed his desire to know, "Whether it be consistent with the character of a Christian to attend those musical exhibitions at the public theatre, call-

ed *Oratorios?*" I beg leave to refer him, and your readers at large, to those just and striking views of this species of entertainment which the Rev. Mr. Newton has given us, in the introduction of his fourth Sermon on the Messiah. As Oratorios have something in them more plausible and specious than other theatrical amusements, I think professing Christians should be more particularly on their guard; and I am inclined to think, that whoever reads the following passage with due attention, will not be present at those *sacred* performances.

"Whereunto shall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like."* I represent to myself a number of persons of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treason. They are already in a state of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are so plain, and the evidence against them so strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved; and that nothing but a pardon can preserve them from punishment. In this situation, it should seem their wisdom to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardless of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amusing themselves, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerfulness as possible. Among other resources, they call in the assistance of music; and amidst a great variety of subjects in this way, they are particularly pleased with one. They choose to make the solemnities of their impending trial, the character of their judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful sentence to which they are exposed, the ground-work of a musical entertainment; and, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the skill of the composer, in adapting the style of his music to the very solemn language and subject with which they are trifling. The king, however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, prevents them with his goodness. Undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message. He assures them that he is unwilling they should suffer: he requires, yea, he entreats them to submit. He

* Luke vii. 31.

points out a way in which their confession and submission shall certainly be accepted; and in this way, which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and full pardon. But, instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music; and this, together with a description of their present state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diversion, accompanied by the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments.* Surely, if such a case as I have supposed, could be found in real life, though I admire the musical taste of these people, I should commiserate their insensibility.

But is not this case more than a supposition? Is it not, in the most serious sense, actually realized amongst ourselves? I should insult your understandings, if I judged a long application necessary. I know my supposition must already have led your thoughts to the subject of the Messiah, and to the spirit and temper of at least the greater part of the performers, and of the audiences. The holy scripture concludes all mankind under sin.† It charges them all with treason and rebellion against the great Sovereign, Lawgiver, and Benefactor; and declares the misery to which, as sinners, we are obnoxious. But God is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious. The stroke of death, which would instantly place us before his awful tribunal, is still suspended. In the mean time he affords us his gospel, by which he assures us there is forgiveness with him. He informs us of a Saviour, and that of his great love to sinners he has given his only Son to be an atonement and mediator, in favour of all who shall sue for mercy in his name. The character of this Saviour, his unspeakable love, his dreadful sufferings, the agonies he endured in Gethsemane and upon the cross, are made known to us; and as his past humiliation, so his present glory, and his invitation to come to him for pardon and eternal life, are largely declared. These are the principal points expressed in the passages of the Messiah. Mr. Handel, who set them to music, has been commemorated and praised, many years after his death, in a place professedly devoted to the praise and worship of

* Dan. iii. 5. † Rom. iii. 9.

God; yea, (if I am not misinformed) the stated worship of God, in that place, was suspended for a considerable time, that it might be duly prepared for the commemoration of Mr. Handel. But alas! how few are disposed to praise and commemorate MESSIAH himself! The same great truths, divested of the music, when delivered from the pulpit, are heard by many admirers of the Oratorio with indifference; too often with contempt!

Having thus, as I conceived myself bound in duty, plainly and publicly delivered my sentiments of the great impropriety of making the fundamental truths of Christianity the subject of a public amusement, I leave what I have said to your serious reflections, hoping it will not be forgotten; for I do not mean to trouble you often with a repetition of it.

REMARKABLE INTERPOSITION.

MRS. LEWIS,* of Norwich, (Eng.) being the daughter of parents whose circumstances were much circumscribed, destitute of education or experience in the world, was put out to service at twelve years of age. Her mistress was a person of suspicious character; who, by frequent presents of gaudy dress, together with the bad example of the whole house, soon led her to expect admirers, and to indulge impure sentiments. From this situation, however, she was removed before she had contracted actual guilt. Her next place was that of a lady's maid; which, at the persuasion of a fellow-servant, she soon left, with a design of going to London, to make their fortune; but her companion proved faithless, and accepted her place, which she had persuaded her to resign. Being a genteel person, unemployed, and unrestrained by her parents, she was seduced by a gentleman of Norwich. Shame soon drove her from her native home. Friendless and unprovided, she went to London; where, in all the wretchedness and criminality of a nature abandoned to vice, she spent several disgraceful years in prostitution, until poverty, intemperance and disease had

* This case was written after frequent visits made to the subject of it in the year 1775; and is well known to several ministers now living.

greatly affected her constitution. Yet, in this miserable situation, she found one who proposed marriage. To this she consented; but the change only afforded her an opportunity of adding iniquity unto iniquity.

Eight years and a half she lived in this abandoned condition. Conscience, though long silent, began at last to make her uneasy. She now had thoughts of reformation, and of making, by her future conduct, an atonement for her past transgressions. For this purpose she applied to a Romish priest, who put her upon the discipline of Holy Church. Books of penance were lent her; and what she found therein recommended, she carried into rigorous execution; such as fasting, starving in the cold, lying upon boards, and, could her constitution have supported it, she was to have lain three nights upon the cold earth, covered with ashes. Having continued one year on this plan, she was hardly able to walk; during which time her conscience and her sins alternately prevailed. She now thought, that if she could procure for herself some excruciating and painful death, it would make amends for all. Under the influence of this dreadful persuasion, she formed the horrid design of murdering her husband, that by the laws of her country she might be condemned to be burned to death. She shewed me the knife she had concealed for this fatal purpose: but her courage failed her, so that she could not perpetrate the execrable deed. Her conscience growing more distressed, she even wished herself in hell, that she might know the worst of it; and more than once, she was prevented from plunging herself into eternal misery.

About this time she was advised by an acquaintance to go to the Tabernacle at Norwich. To this she objected, fearing, if it were known, she should be deemed an enthusiast. Conscience, however, pressed, and despair prevailed, which at last determined her to go; but not before she had fallen on her knees and prayed, "Lord, direct me where to go! Lord, bring me where I may find direction for my soul, for I am a ruined sinner, and if not soon helped, I must be lost; lost forever!" Three days afterwards she stole into the Tabernacle. Upon being seated, the solemnity of the place, the apparent attention, and seriousness of the people, together with the sweetness of the hymns, concurred to induce a belief, that this was the right way. This

occasioned her to shed tears, of which she was much ashamed; thinking no one, beside herself, was ever so weak as to weep at the singing of a hymn. Mr. Hook was at this time the preacher at the Tabernacle, whose sermon came home with great power to her heart. Yet instead of that comfort, which she wished for and expected, she saw, and believed herself to be, the most vile and contemptible sinner upon earth; apprehending that every body might read her sins in her countenance, and that they would not suffer her to come there any more; yea, she expected every moment that some one would be sent to turn her out.

Soon after, the writer of this had an opportunity of visiting her at her own house, and found her in the greatest agonies of soul; nor could she for several weeks receive a gleam of comfort, though my colleague or myself visited her almost every day. In the midst of her distress, a temptation was suggested to her mind, "You are sure of damnation, and as well now as later: you cannot be much worse; hell itself would be a refuge for such a wretch as you are." Upon this she took the resolution, "I will go once more to the Tabernacle; and, if not better, I am determined to drown myself in the river." Fully settled in this horrid resolution, she went. Mr. Hook soon after appeared in the pulpit, and gave out a hymn, the first verses of which are as follows:—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
"Let me to thy bosom fly,
"Whilst the nearer waters roll,
"Whilst the tempest still is high.

"Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
"Till the storm of life is past;
"Safe into the haven guide,
"O, receive my soul at last!"

She immediately conceived that some one had informed the minister of her situation, and that he had made this hymn for her sake. It pleased God to lead her thoughts thus to contemplate the subject of the hymn, as suited to her own particular case. "Truly I am in the storm and tempest; much do I need a haven of rest; who knows but that I at last, bad as I am, may find Jesus a Saviour?" It was at this time she first found comfort. So powerfully

were the words of the hymn impressed, and so completely did they occupy her mind, that she neither remembered the text nor the sermon. She now abandoned the thoughts of self-murder, and continued under the ministry, growing up gradually into the spirit and comfort of the gospel, till she became one of the most humble, broken-hearted, spiritual, and practical Christians I ever had the pleasure of knowing. All this summer she continued very weak in body, tender in her conscience, and felt the symptoms of a dissolving constitution. A rash word or sinful thought would distress her soul for days afterwards. She never came to the Lord's table but in a flood of tears; nor till after every one else had received, supposing herself to be utterly unworthy to be numbered with the people of God; though to all but herself she appeared ripening fast for a better world.

After her conversion she had many fears and much unbelief to fight against; yet upon the whole she could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." *

In the winter, 1775, she calmly resigned her soul into the hands of the Friend of sinners, and went to join that multitude before the throne, who came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.† She was buried in the Tabernacle at Norwich, and the Rev. Mr. C. preached her funeral sermon.

The above relation contains facts well-attested, and which can be authenticated by several living witnesses. Let men attribute them to what cause they please, the facts are certain: her life was changed, her soul was blessed, and her death was happy. Those who are of faith will not hesitate a moment to attribute all these effects to the sovereignty of divine grace. With such instances before our eyes, how pertinent and forcible are the words of the prophet, "*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.*"‡

* 2 Tim. ii. 12. † Rev. vii. 14. ‡ Isa. xlv. 22.

MEMOIR

Of the Lord's gracious Dealings with ELIZABETH LASKEY, *late of Ray Street, Clerkenwell, (Eng.) who departed to a blessed Immortality, on Thursday, April 2, 1795, in the sixty-fourth Year of her Age.*

DIVINE grace produces in the heart the most benign and generous principles: it teaches its happy possessor to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice. Next to the sensible presence of the Holy Spirit on the soul, the believer cannot enjoy a more exalted pleasure, than in seeing ignorant sinners brought to the knowledge of the truth, and suffering saints supported and comforted in their various tribulations. To such as are experimentally acquainted with the truth of this remark, the following narrative will not be unacceptable; it contains a brief account of the Lord's goodness to one, who, though very poor and needy among men, was divinely enriched from her Saviour's fulness, and is now beholding his face without a vail.

ELIZABETH LASKEY, whose experience is the subject of these few pages, was born at Fowey in Cornwall, in the year 1731. She continued in that awful state of enmity and ignorance, in which all are by nature involved, until the month of April, 1785; when it pleased God, by the grace of his Holy Spirit, to convince her of her need of Jesus, as a Saviour, in a very remarkable manner. The Lord, who had some time before taken her husband, saw fit to lay his afflicting hand upon her only son, a child between five and six years of age; and the sickness proved unto death. A few days before his decease, the poor boy was particularly desirous of seeing a gracious woman, who had been a kind friend to his mother; but he was told it would be in vain to go for her then, as she was gone to Spa-field chapel (the place of worship which she constantly attended,) on which, looking earnestly on his mother, he said, "Mother, *have you no God?*" "Yes, my dear!" she replied. "*Then,*" said he, "*why have you never told me of him?* Why don't you go and serve him as Mrs. E. does?—*Do, mother, when I am dead, go where she goes, and serve her God?*" On Mrs. E.'s return from chapel, she came and spake to the little sufferer concerning Jesus, the sinner's friend. He listened to her with deep at-

tention and apparent joy. In a few days after, he was taken to the bosom of that compassionate Saviour, "who gathers the lambs in his arms—and even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings ordaineth strength."

On the Sunday after the child's departure, Mrs. E. kindly came to condole with the afflicted mother, and said to her, "Now I hope you will fulfil the dying request of your child, and go with your burden of trouble to the house of God."—With this request she complied, and went in the evening to Spa-field chapel. The minister was led to discourse upon the words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria—"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst," &c. The impressions which she received from the Lord under the sermon are only to be conceived of by those who can experimentally say, "he told me all that ever I did!—Is not this the Christ?" "Then it was," said she, speaking of this event with a grateful heart and weeping eyes, "I first saw my sins to be exceeding sinful, and felt the necessity of deliverance from them by the free grace of my Saviour! It appeared to me as if I was singled out from the rest of the congregation; and so exactly was the preacher led to describe my case, that, until I was assured to the contrary, I could not but think that Mrs. E. had been with him, and told him all my past conduct and my present circumstances. I saw my lost and undone condition as a sinner; and, when the minister was setting forth the free love of Jesus, in bestowing his salvation, with all its blessings, upon the poor and the perishing, without money or price, my heart sent up many secret cries that I might be permitted to drink of the fountain of life,—that I might thirst no more after sinful objects; and, I trust, before the close of the service, the Lord gave me encouragement to look unto him, poor and vile as I was, for pardon and life. On my return home," added she, "I kissed the cold lips of my dear boy's corpse, and kneeling down, blessed that God who put it into his heart to direct me where to go for comfort when he should be taken from me." Thus was that good word fulfilled in her experience—"In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness: the meek, also, shall increase

their joy in the Lord; and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

From the above period, she became a close attendant upon the means of grace, and was soon after led into the liberty of the gospel, so that she could cheerfully adopt the language of David, and say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."

Such is the mercy with which our heavenly Father tempers the severest of his dispensations, that, though deprived of her husband, and the son of her tender love, she had yet one earthly comfort left, an only daughter, who was about eighteen years old at the time of her brother's decease. This affectionate child had been to her mother what Ruth was to good old Naomi, the faithful partner of her deep distress; having, from her twelfth year, laboured hard to soothe the rugged path which Providence had appointed them to tread. But as yet she knew not the Lord Jesus Christ. On her behalf many prayers and tears were poured out before the throne of mercy: nor were they long unanswered; for soon after, it pleased him, "who hath the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth," to open her heart under the preaching of his word, as he did that of Lydia of old, to attend to the things pertaining to salvation. From this time, the poor habitation in which they dwelt became a Bethel; and often were their hearts uniting in thankful praises to God, when they had very little, and sometimes nothing wherewith to refresh their bodies. Happy souls!—They knew the truth of Solomon's words: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

"Though meanly clad, and coarsely fed,
"And, like their Saviour, poor;
"They would not change their gospel bread
"For all the worldling's store."

Thus did they go on in the delightful fellowship of the gospel for about four years; when death had his commission to separate them for a season. This beloved daughter, dear by the ties of nature, but still dearer by the indissoluble ties of grace, was called to her eternal rest, in the twenty-second year of her age, having left a blessed testimony that she had not believed in vain.

The afflicted parent, seeing her last earthly comfort expire, and being deprived of the staff of her age at a moment when she wanted it most, was so oppressed by the suggestions of Satan, and the remaining corruptions of her heart, that for about six weeks she was reduced to the brink of despair. Under these circumstances, she went one evening to the Rev. Mr. Willis's society, (of which she was some years a member,) when it so happened that he gave an exhortation on Psalm cxxxviii. 1, 2, 3. "I will praise thee with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name: in the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." From that memorable night, so divinely was her soul set at liberty, that doubts and fears were no more suffered to prevail: so true is that word, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Let the Christian pilgrim, therefore, expect, whilst in this vale of tears, to meet with pilgrim's fare. His severest trials often lead to his brightest enjoyments, and his happiest moments frequently are the forerunners of his sharpest exercises. Thus it was with our departed sister. She had been for some years afflicted with a bleeding cancer on the side of her neck; and shortly after the Lord had so graciously raised her from the borders of despair, she was confined to her room to go out no more: for, in the month of November, 1789, her disorder arising to such an height that a vessel in her neck burst, she bled incessantly for several hours, so that it was expected she could not long survive. It pleased God, however, to revive her in some degree; though from that time her right arm withered, and became totally useless. Sharp as these afflictions were, she was not permitted to murmur; on the contrary, she could habitually say, through infinite grace,

"My Father's hand prepares the cup;
"And what he wills is best."

Yea, so sweetly did she speak of the love of Jesus, that her conversation was delightful both to ministers and private Christians who attended her. And so kind was the Lord, that he not only gave her large supplies of grace for her

soul, but he so inclined the hearts of his people to minister to her necessities, that she was never destitute of such relief as the nature of her situation required.

To hear her dwell upon the glory and preciousness of Jesus, was truly refreshing. Even when agonizing with the most acute pains of body, she would cry out, in the language of grateful admiration, "Let none despair of mercy, since I am not denied it! Let no poor sinner fear to come to Jesus, since he has received one so guilty and worthless as I am!

"O may I never once forget
"What a poor worm I am;
"From death and hell redeem'd by blood,
"The blood of God's dear Lamb."

"I long to be with my Jesus!"

"How long, dear Saviour, O how long
"Will that bright hour delay?
"Fly swiftly round, ye wheels of time,
"And bring the welcome day."

Then, as if chiding her impatience, she would say,

"Tarry his leisure, then,
"Although he seems to stay;
"A moment's intercourse with him
"Thy griefs will overpay.
"Blest is the man, O Lord,
"That stays himself on thee;
"Who waits for thy salvation, Lord,
"Shall thy salvation see."

The passages of scripture particularly blessed to her soul, were the 43d and 51st of Isaiah—the 37th of Ezekiel—the 7th of Micah; and especially that precious text, Heb. xiii. 5. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!"—a promise so remarkably fulfilled to her, even as to temporal supplies, that though on the 5th of November, 1789, when the Lord was pleased to lay her on her sick bed, she had not one penny in the world, yet during her long and painful illness she never knew the want of any necessary comfort. "This (she thankfully said) is the wonderful mercy of my God; and

"It is his daily care,
"His helpless sheep to feed;
"To purify their spotted souls,
"And tend and gently lead."

"My Lord knows that I want purifying, and I am sure that when I am tried I shall come forth as gold; for he hath given me that good word of promise to rest upon, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season." (Job v. 26.)—"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?—the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?"—"Yea, my Maker is my husband, the Lord of hosts is his name." Then addressing those who were around her bed, she said, "I love you all, my dear Christian friends; but I long to leave you, that I may go to the presence of Jesus.

"And when to that bright world I rise,
"And join the anthems in the skies,
"Above the rest, this note shall swell,
"My Jesus hath done all things well."

On another occasion, when the writer of this memoir came to visit her, she said with much earnestness, O my dear father, I longed to see you once more, to tell you how good my Jesus is to me. My pains of body are unutterable, but his presence is so continually with me, that I drink of the cup of full assurance of my interest in his love. I have not a remaining doubt on my mind.—O tell to all around, that the Lord has been, and still is, so good to me, an unworthy sinner, that I can look death in the face with joy. I long for the welcome messenger to close my eyes on this world, that I may see Jesus as he is.

Being for some time before her death, incapable of taking any thing but liquids, she was almost reduced to a skeleton. Nor was it without much difficulty that she could utter a sentence. The placid smile, however, which appeared on her countenance, sufficiently indicated the inward peace of her mind, and the ardent longings of her soul for immortality. When enabled to drop a word or two, she would say, "I am happily content"—"Precious Jesus! not my will, but thine be done"—"I am solidly happy, not a doubt nor a cloud left"—"Come, O my Saviour, come away."—In one of my last interviews with her, she said, "You will soon hear of my departure, and *then rejoice*—Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

At length the long wished-for day arrived. On Thursday, April 2d, 1795, she was called to leave this vale of tears. The approach of death, of which she was perfectly sensible, instead of alarming her fears, excited more fervent desires to be with Jesus. And having, like the dying patriarch, solemnly blessed those around her, with a gentle sigh she breathed out her soul into the bosom of her God and Saviour. At her own request, her remains were interred in Bunhill Fields, where a funeral oration was delivered upon the occasion, to a numerous and affected auditory.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow."

FOR THE WITNESS.

ORIGINAL LETTER.

My dear brother,

NOTHING more distinguishes the Christian character than an habitual reverence for the name and word of God. How is it, then, that so many persons making the profession of religion are found quoting the scriptures and using sacred epithets in common conversation? If the scriptures were given by the inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, how impious is it to resort to them for matter of amusement and the display of wit in seasons of conviviality! Conceiving it to be proper to expose this unchristian practice to merited detestation, I take the liberty of relating to you some facts to which I have been witness, that your mind and my own may be more deeply impressed with a sense of the character of that Being who is ever jealous of his honour, and with the tremendous consequences of trifling with divine and eternal things. You know it is not uncommon for persons who do not pretend particularly to regard religion, to embellish their performances with scripture phrases, and even to head their advertisements with some sacred passage: but what was my surprise and grief not long since to observe a public notice for the sale of an estate headed with, "Come and see!" Recollecting the interesting oc-

currences at the time when Philip gave this invitation to his brother Nathanael, I cast my eyes to the bottom of the piece to ascertain the author, and there I recognized the name of a former acquaintance, who was now become a preacher of the gospel!—Once, when attending the debates on an important question in our Legislature, I was shocked with an instance of this species of profanity. One who advocated the measure in debate, asserted that the necessity of it was so clear, that he who doubted ought to be damned! His antagonist retorted, that the belief of that necessity evinced that God had sent the party strong delusions, that they might believe a lie and be damned. If I do not mistake, both of the speakers were professors of religion! Now if such things are practised by professors and even by ministers, what may not be expected of the world at large? How long the custom has prevailed I know not, but it is now no uncommon thing to hear the scriptures quoted quite as freely and fluently at the bar, and, as I am informed, at the theatre, as from the pulpit. If by some this is done to manifest a contempt of the bible, it is obviously done by others to display their *knowledge* of it. But do such gentlemen consider that they only betray their pride and ignorance in so doing? He who rightly understands the scriptures will never trifle with, nor prostitute them. "Thy words were found of me, (says one,) and I did eat them; and thy word became the joy and rejoicing of my heart." "Unto that man will I look," saith Jehovah, "who trembleth at my word." Now, from my soul I despise the cant of some would-be reformers, who catch at, and magnify the faults of the clergy; but when public teachers of religion and morality, whoever they may be, become justly chargeable with giving to the world an example of perverting the word of God, or treating it with levity, surely the profession ought not to shield them from censure. No; let every follower of the Lamb address such in the keen and pertinent language of Paul, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" I may be thought wanting in liberality, but, however that may be, I assure you I am induced to pity that person, whether lawyer, legislator or minister, who can quote the scriptures for amusement, or select a sacred sentence or epithet to furnish a retort, or give an edge to satire. For it is written, "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroy-

ed; but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded."

My brother, let us be faithful to God, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves. Let us not be intimidated by the number or potency of those who openly oppose or abuse the truth, or who love the praise of men more than the praise of God. Vice is vice, and impiety, impiety, in a courtier or a peasant, in an ecclesiastic or a layman. Let us not be bribed into silence by *splendid* folly; nor fear to shew our opinions because they may be unpopular. The time is at hand that judgment must begin at the house of God; wherefore let us commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator. QUARTUS.

CHARITY.

Messrs. Editors,

HAVING heard that at Charlestown endeavours have been successfully made to supply the poor with provisions, &c. in this inclement season, I thought it an example worthy of being followed by every one, and by Christians especially. I hope that those who have the means of alleviating the sufferings of the poor will have an inclination to do it. Daughters of Zion and Jerusalem! stretch out the hand to the poor; yea, reach forth your hands to the needy. Might not raiment of needle-work be prepared for the little ones shivering in our streets? The Lord, said Hannah of old time, maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. But, sisters, I fear it is too much the fashion to mind the plaiting of the hair, wearing of gold, and putting on of apparel, to attend to acts of charity, such as contributions to the poor saints and others. Let us wipe away our reproach, and so stop the poor pen of

Jan. 1, 1809. JULIA.

The nymphs of Sion and Solyma we hope will begin the song in which the widow's heart may shout aloud for joy, according to the *seasonable* suggestion of their sister Julia. It is a circumstance to be regretted, that the streams of mercy are by arbitrary custom frequently prevented from

flowing from a source which, more than all others, would be productive. Are not humanity, pity, and tenderness, qualities which particularly distinguish the female character? As the Redeemer went to Calvary, a great company of women bewailed and lamented him: and the reply he vouchsafed to them, one would think sufficient to awaken an interest in every Christian bosom for both the temporal and spiritual welfare of neighbours. We flatter ourselves that each of the sisterhood will on this occasion emulate the character in the lesson of Lemuel. *Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.* EDITORS.

ANECDOTES.

The Drunkard reformed.

THE late R. P. of W. was for some time awfully ensnared by the sin of drunkenness; but was at length recovered from it in the following singular way:—He had a tame goat, which was wont to follow him to the ale-house which he frequented; one day, by way of frolic, he gave the animal so much ale, that it became intoxicated. What particularly struck Mr. P. was, that, from that time, though the creature would follow him to the door, he never could get it to enter the house. Revolving this circumstance in his mind, Mr. P. was led to see how much the sin by which he had been enslaved had sunk him beneath a beast; and from that time he became a sober man.

Hint to Public Speakers.

THE venerable Witherspoon, late president of New-Jersey College, once observed to the students under his care, that probably some of them would be called to public speaking, either in political bodies, or from the pulpit. "*Should this,*" said he, "*be the case, I have this laconic advice to give you.* 1. *Never attempt to speak unless you have something valuable to say.* 2. *Always conclude when you have nothing important to deliver without a repetition of what you have already said.*" Were this hint generally attended to, the patience of audiences would not be so frequently exhausted by puerile discourses, nor tried with tedious repetition.

On playing at Cards.

Mr. Dod, an eminent minister, being solicited to play at cards, arose from his seat, and uncovered his head. The company asked him what he was going to do. He replied, "To crave God's blessing." They immediately exclaimed, "We never ask a blessing on such an occasion." "Then," said he, "I never engage in any thing, but on what I can beg of God to give his blessing."

The Infidel answered.

"What great matter," said a heathen to a Christian, while he was beating him almost to death, "what great matter did Christ ever do for thee?"—"Even this," said the Christian; "that I can forgive you, though you use me thus cruelly."

A Suggestion claiming Notice.

A gospel minister in Boston, once discoursing to his people on the doubts with which the believer is sometimes distressed, remarked that this was no just argument against religion in general nor any particular denomination.—"Could you (said he,) look into the breast *even of the Universalist*, it is probable you might discover that sometimes he had doubts of the truth of his doctrine."

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

From Hampden, in the District of Maine, we have the following pleasing accounts of recent awakenings. In a letter dated December 13, 1808, it is stated that "the Lord is pouring out his Spirit there. Many who were far from God and righteousness have been compelled to bow the knee to Jesus. Among them is a boy about fourteen years old, whose parents as well as himself were very ungodly. He went to an evening lecture, as he afterwards acknowledged, "to make game," and had actually begun his sport in the meeting; but it pleased God to stop him short by showing him the iniquity of his conduct; which made him cry out in keen distress, "I am a sinner, and have been one all my days."

In another letter of January 4, 1809, the same writer says, "God is doing wonderful things among us. Many souls are born into the kingdom of the Redeemer. Such are the displays of God's power, that some are struck to the ground under a sense of guilt. A goodly number have been baptized within a few days past."

A letter from a friend at Mansfield (Connecticut) dated Jan. 9, 1809, informs us that the state of religion there is pleasing. "The church in this place (he adds) was gathered about eighteen months ago, and consisted of but nineteen members. In this short time the number has increased to upwards of *fifty*; and their present prospects are encouraging. Their new meeting-house was opened on Wednesday last. May the great Head of the Church fill it with his glory, and many therein be made the trophies of victorious grace."

By the minutes of the Bowdoinham Association held at Fayette, Sept. 28, 1808, we are happy to observe considerable additions to the churches in that connexion: particularly in Lewistown, Green, Portland and Canaan, which have received the year past, 118 members. There are 40 churches in this Association, their whole number is 2277, their increase the last year 238, and their deaths 13. Their Circular Letter on the Atonement, we think a scriptural and well-written performance.

We have been favoured with the minutes of the Vermont Baptist Association, holden the 5th of October last. In nineteen churches which compose this Association, there are 1210 members. Their additions the last year were 161, their deaths 7. In five of the churches their increase was considerable, particularly in Pittsford, where 53 were added. An extract from their Circular Letter in our next.

REMARKS

On a Sermon, entitled, "The Will of God, respecting the Salvation of all Men, illustrated." By JACOB NORTON, *A. M. Pastor of the first Church in Weymouth.* 1 Tim. ii. 4. *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.* 24 pp. 8vo. Lincoln and Edmands. 1809.

THE two leading propositions in this discourse are—1. That God wills the salvation of all men. 2. That they

come unto the knowledge of the truth. The author begins by illustrating the fact, that the phrase "will of God," in the scriptures, is frequently "put for his command, or direction to men, to do such things as are acceptable and pleasing to him." In this sense he understands the word *will* made use of in the text. He endeavours to prove, from scripture and fact, that it cannot mean the divine *determination*. For if it be so understood, it will contradict many plain declarations of the word of God respecting the endless misery of the wicked, as well as the fact that all men are not saved and do not come unto the knowledge of the truth. It is also clearly demonstrated, that the words "all men" do not mean the whole human race. For "the command can extend to those only who are capable of understanding and obeying it. In this number infants and idiots cannot be included; nor, indeed, any who have neither opportunity nor capacity for becoming acquainted with the gospel." "But God commands or requires all men, without exception, who enjoy the gospel, or are in a situation to become acquainted with it, to obtain salvation by believing in, and by obedience to it."

In his improvement, the Author very clearly exposes the wickedness and fallacy of the Universalian doctrine, and considers it as partaking of infidelity, by denying the truth of that divine threatening, which is implied in the curse of the law, and in the final sentence which will be pronounced on the wicked in the day of judgment.

In pages 19 and 20 is the following solemn admonition to false ministers, which it is hoped will be a warning to those blind leaders of the blind, who are crying, "Peace, peace," when the Lord has not spoken peace.

"It has been shewn, that there is an essential difference in the moral character of men, who are distinguished by the names of righteous, and wicked, &c. that God exercises different feelings towards them; that while the righteous are in a pardoned state, the wicked are under sentence of condemnation, and that while God speaks peace and comfort to the former, he denounces dreadful threatenings against the latter. In view of this, how very great must appear the impropriety, the unreasonableness and danger of addressing men promiscuously, and especially from the pulpit, as if they possessed, essentially, the same character, and as if no differ-

ence existed between them, but in relation to different degrees of their goodness and depravity! Is it not a very melancholy consideration, that many at the present day, whose office requires them faithfully to speak to their fellow-men the words of God, to declare his whole counsel, and to do nothing by partiality, instead of making due distinction, in their official communications, between the righteous and the wicked, do, in effect, address them as if they sustained essentially the same character? Instead of representing the wicked as "serpents, and a generation of vipers, as filled with all unrighteousness, and as haters of God," is it not in many instances the case, that the public teachers of religion address them in mild and softened expressions like these, "Frail and erring children of God, whose wanderings and whose errors he does not view with an eye of severity or much disapprobation, as they result rather from the head than from the heart?" Instead of representing them as objects of the divine anger, as under the condemnation and wrath of God, do they not often address them as objects of the divine favour, complacency and loving-kindness? Instead of representing them as waxing worse and worse, do they not countenance the idea, that in many instances, at least, they are growing better and better? And, instead of urging them to turn *directly about*, do they not urge them in common with the righteous, to *push forward*, to grow in grace, to cherish their religious affections, and to make greater and greater advances in *virtue and piety?*

"My brethren, did Jesus Christ and his apostles thus instruct and address sinners? Did they thus confound the characters of the righteous and the wicked? Is this mode of address any where inculcated in the gospel, either by example or precept? Can you, for a moment, hesitate for a proper answer? How unreasonable and dangerous is such smooth prophesying! How destructive its tendency! Alas, alas! that "prophets should prophesy falsely, and that people should love to have it so!"

The Author takes a comprehensive view of many important truths revealed in the word of God, and considers them as connected with each other in systematic harmony; all tending to display the glory of the divine perfections, and to secure the highest good of all intelligences, who are reconciled to God and his government. The discourse is in general

illustrated from scripture, and it is hoped will be useful. We are sorry, however, to observe this sentence in page 8—"God requires of men, repentance of sin, faith in the gospel, and obedience to its precepts, *as a condition* of salvation." With deference to the respectable Author, it is presumed that repentance and faith are the gift of God, and that obedience is the evidence that these are bestowed. They are not, therefore, required of sinners as the terms on which God will bestow his favour. He loves his people while enemies to him, and produces a radical change in the temper of their hearts by his word and Spirit, before they have one right moral exercise. If it had been said that sinners cannot be saved without faith and repentance, it would have accorded better with divine truth. It is not, however, here meant to be conveyed that faith and repentance are not the duty of the sinner. This is readily granted. To deny this, would be to deny moral obligation. But it by no means follows, that because they are duties, they are conditions of salvation. These were fulfilled by the Saviour for his people in his obedience unto death. His church is therefore called "the purchased possession." They are that reward which the Father promised him, "because he poured out his soul unto death." And in this connexion was it declared, that Jesus should "see of the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied."

THE INFLUENCES OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE HEART. JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

DEAR Lord, and shall thy Spirit rest
In such a wretched heart as mine?
Unworthy dwelling! glorious guest!
Favour astonishing, divine!

When sin prevails, and gloomy fear,
And hope almost expires in night,
Lord, can thy Spirit then be here,
Great Spring of comfort, life and light?

Sure the blest Comforter is nigh,
'Tis he sustains my fainting heart;
Else would my hopes forever die,
And ev'ry cheering ray depart.

When some kind promise glads my soul,
Do I not find his healing voice
The tempest of my fears control,
And bid my drooping pow'rs rejoice?

Whene'er to call the Saviour mine,
With ardent wish my heart aspires,
Can it be less than pow'r divine,
Which animates these strong desires?

What less than thy almighty word,
Can raise my heart from earth and dust,
And bid me cleave to thee, my Lord,
My life, my treasure, and my trust?

And when my cheerful hope can say
I love my God, and taste his grace,
Lord, is it not thy blissful ray,
Which brings this dawn of sacred peace?

Let thy kind Spirit in my heart
Forever dwell, O God of love,
And light and heav'nly peace impart,
Sweet earnest of the joys above.

MRS. STEELE.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

AN anonymous correspondent is assured that we do not agree with him in the opinion, that "the arguments for family prayer are *principally* drawn from propriety, decency, custom, and antiquity." We are certain that the holy scriptures "throughly furnish the man of God to *every* good work;" and we submit it to the consideration of our friend, whether the passages he has so liberally quoted are not subversive of the point he aimed to establish.—But as the subject of prayer will be taken up in a future number, it is at present only recommended to the querist, to pray without ceasing, and in *every* thing to give thanks. One remark more—As a certain English piece it *seems* may need a translation, it is necessary to know into what language our monitor would have it turned for his convenience. To indulge "the lowest capacity" to an unlimited extent, would be, in our apprehension, at least culpable. It has been and still is our intention to witness, with help obtained from God, both to *small* and *great*, none other things than the holy oracles authorize.

Our readers will please to observe, that the phrase, "FOR THE WITNESS," is meant to distinguish those pieces which are original from those which are selected.